REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 5, 6, 9, 12, 15, 17, 18, 22-26, 28-31, 33, 35, 39, 51 and 59-69 of the application remain rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of the Siegmund, Allred, Kurtzer, Santangelo and Yarush references. Dependent claims have been rejected in combination with these references along with the Woodard or Eastman references.

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of the claims and note the following for consideration. The invention relates to a small diameter endoscope for use in orthopedic imaging.

Thus, Applicants have invented a small diameter endoscope for diagnostic orthopedic imaging having a first disposable component, namely, the probe, and a second disposable component, the cannula. The cannula extends over the removable probe to provide for percutaneous entry that is required for orthopedic applications. The cannula can be attached to the removable (disposable) probe with a locking mechanism and can also include a fluid delivery port. This provides an interconnected three component system that is not described or suggested in the cited references.

Applicants further respectfully traverse the rejected based on Siegmund, Allred, Kurtzer, Santangelo and Yarush. In particular, one skilled in the art would not be motivated to

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provide Siegmund device at the claimed size in view of the resulting loss in image size and resolution and thereby compromise diagnostic value. There is also no teaching in the references using a cannula with a small diameter disposable device or of a handle incorporating both the imaging device. Allred does not teach the use of a disposable component and thus does not disclose or suggest the mounting hub structure of the probe. Allred also fails to teach or suggest the thin illumination channel feature. This feature provides for a larger light collection area relative to the light illumination area. Siegmund also employs a large illumination area for the concentric designs shown in Figs. 6(a) and 9(a) of Siegumnd. Applicants note that in reducing the diameter of the device, the relative size of the illumination channel has been substantially reduced to be in a range of 0.1 mm to 0.2 mm. See claims 10, 28, 50, 89 and 90, for example. Applicants submit that it would not be obvious to combine the recited features in a small diameter orthopedic imaging device. Reconsideration is respectfully requested. New claims 81-90 have been added for consideration.

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The Examiner is encouraged to telephone the undersigned attorney to discuss any matter that would expedite allowance of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

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